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**Introduced by Senator Migden**

February 18, 2005

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An act relating to group homes.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 486, as introduced, Migden. Group homes: reimbursement rates.

Existing law, pursuant to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children–Foster Care (AFDC–FC) program, requires the State Department of Social Services to classify group home programs and to establish rates for foster care providers licensed as group homes according to those classifications.

This bill would make legislative findings and declarations relating to California's existing group home program and would declare the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would transition that program to a residential care system that defines services, establishes procedural and assessment standards, and integrates funding for necessary services, as provided by the bill.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares as follows:
- 2 (a) Approximately 13,000 children and youth in California
- 3 currently receive some type of residential treatment services in
- 4 group homes, all of which are operated by private nonprofit
- 5 agencies. Of those children, about 7,500 are dependents of the
- 6 court placed by county child welfare services, 4,500 are wards of
- 7 the court placed by county juvenile probation departments, and

1 1,000 are placed voluntarily by their parents through county  
2 mental health departments pursuant to individual educational  
3 plans.

4 (b) Children and youth placed in residential care fall into a  
5 wide variety of categories including all of the following:

6 (1) Those in need of emergency shelter and assessment.

7 (2) Pregnant and parenting teens.

8 (3) Older youth preparing to emancipate from the foster care  
9 system.

10 (4) Youth in the juvenile justice system with behavioral  
11 disorders.

12 (5) Youth with substance abuse problems.

13 (6) Juvenile sex offenders.

14 (7) Emotionally disturbed youth and those with mental illness.

15 (8) Youth in need of life skills training.

16 (9) Foster youth placed in academically-focused academies.

17 (c) Despite the divergent needs of the populations of children  
18 and youth in residential care, and the wide variety of specialized  
19 programs designed to meet those needs, “group home” is the only  
20 licensing category governing these programs and facilities. The  
21 Community Care Licensing Division of the State Department of  
22 Social Services reports that there are 1,758 licensed group homes  
23 in the California, ranging in size from single 6-bed homes in the  
24 community to large campus-style programs with a single license.

25 (d) There is no standardized assessment protocol for  
26 determining which children’s needs can best be met in residential  
27 care settings and the type of residential program most appropriate  
28 to each child’s needs.

29 (e) While the children and youth placed in group homes have  
30 significant behavioral and treatment needs, the AFDC-Foster  
31 Care program is only designed to pay for care, supervision and  
32 some social work services. In most cases, the current  
33 AFDC-Foster Care program rates for group homes are  
34 inadequate to cover the reasonable costs of providing these basic  
35 services.

36 (f) In addition, county placing agencies and the private  
37 nonprofit agencies operating group homes must continuously  
38 struggle to patch together funding and to access services from  
39 many other systems in order to meet a particular child’s needs for

1 health, mental health, substance abuse, education, vocational  
2 training, and other essential services.

3 (g) Accordingly, it is the intent of the Legislature to enact  
4 legislation in subsequent amendments that would transition  
5 California's existing group home program into a residential care  
6 system that would do all of the following:

7 (1) Defines the assortment of residential service programs  
8 essential to meet the varying needs of the diverse populations of  
9 children served.

10 (2) Establishes a standard methodology for identifying  
11 children whose needs can best be met in residential care settings  
12 and matching them with the type of residential program most  
13 appropriate to their needs.

14 (3) Creates standardized measures of successful outcomes  
15 appropriate for the diverse populations served in residential care.

16 (4) Integrates funding for the array of services necessary to  
17 achieve appropriate outcomes for children in a way that supports  
18 the services required by each child, addresses the actual cost of  
19 those services, and reflects provider performance in delivering  
20 the services.